

# **State Emergency Coordination Center (SECC)**

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## **Situation Report for August 1, 2007**

(issued @ 1500 hrs.)



# **2007 FIRES**

- Requests for State Financial Assistance

### **Report Includes:**

- Background Information
  - Fire Restrictions & Closures
  - Air Quality
  - Road Closures/Travel Restrictions
- Current Incident Situation
- New Large Fires
- Weather
- State Declarations
- Local & Tribal Declarations
- Local Government Emergency Operations
- Summary of State Resources Committed.

### **Important Websites:**

State of Montana Fire Information:

<http://mt.gov/fire.asp>

National Interagency Fire Center

[http://www.nifc.gov/fire\\_info/nfn.htm](http://www.nifc.gov/fire_info/nfn.htm)

Northern Rockies Coordination Center

<http://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/>

### **I. Background Information**

Since June, hot and dry weather has dominated the region creating very high to extreme fire conditions. Fire Indices are at an all time high while fuel moistures are low. Accompanying the high indices are weather patterns that have set the conditions for lightning and lightning caused starts. High pressure weather patterns over the region are responsible for the high temperatures and little to no moisture. Occasional cold fronts push through the region causing severe lightning storms that ignite wildfires. Rain has accompanied some of these fronts but a return to a high pressure system mitigates any moisture that fell. The weather forecasts project a continuing of the high pressure systems through August and possible into September.

**Fire Restrictions & Closures:** Portions of the state are currently under Stage I or Stage II Fire Restrictions. For definitions of these restrictions, see:

<http://www.mt.blm.gov/fire/restrictions/stageI.pdf>

<http://www.mt.blm.gov/fire/restrictions/stageII.pdf>

Fire Restrictions in effect for specific areas:

<http://www.mt.blm.gov/fire/restrictions/index.html>

**Air Quality & Smoke:** The Montana Department of Environmental Quality issues a daily forecast and discussion of potential smoke impacts throughout the state. The forecast can be accessed at <http://www.deq.state.mt.us/fireupdates/index.asp>.

**Road Closures & Travel Restrictions:**

<http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/reports/alerts.shtml>

**Department of Fish, Wildlife, & Parks**

[Current Fire Restrictions](#)

[Drought & Fire Updates](#)

[Drought & Fire News](#)

**II. Current Incident Situation** - Incidents listed according to current NRCG priority. *(This report includes summary information for Montana fires that are currently greater than 100 acres in size. Fires are being dropped from this report once they reach 100% containment)*

- A public meeting concerning the Pattengail Creek Fire is scheduled for this evening at 7:30 PM in the Wise River Community Hall
- A public meeting concerning the Ahorn Fire is scheduled for this evening in the Augusta High School.

The Northern Rockies Coordination Center (Missoula) has enlisted the assistance of an Area Command Team (Zimmerman) to help analyze assessments for long duration fires and emerging incidents.

**Meriwether** located on the Helena National Forest, in the Gates of the Mountains Wilderness. Bennett's Type 1 IMT is managing this fire as a branch under the Ahorn fire. Current size is estimated at 20,745 acres with 25% containment. Personnel Assigned: 193. Cause: Lightning. Evacuations are in effect. Structures remain threatened in Eldorado subdivision, Holter Lake and Beaver Creek. An emergency closure is in place that encompasses the Gates of the Mountains Wilderness Area as well as Coulter Campground along the Missouri River. A River Closure is in place for Upper Holter Reservoir from American Bar Gulch extending north to Beartooth Landing.

**Mile Marker 124** is located 3 miles east of Clinton. The fire is 2,975 acres with 10% containment. Angell's Type 2 IMT is assigned. Personnel assigned: 219. Structures are threatened. Cause: Under investigation. Traffic restrictions on Interstate 90, Mandatory evacuations in Cramer Creek.

**Skyland** is located on the Flathead NF near Summit. LaFave's Type 2 IMT is assigned. Fire is estimated at 16,055 acres with 5% containment. Personnel assigned: 518. Structures are threatened. Evacuations are occurring. Cause: Lightning. Significant spotting contributed to rates of spread and strong winds increased fire spread intensity. Fire has burned onto the Blackfeet Reservation near Dog Gun Lake. ***MT-DES has deployed an Agency Representative to assist in the Blackfeet Indian Reservation Emergency Operations Center (EOC).***

**Ahorn Fire** on the Lewis and Clark National Forest in Lewis and Clark County being managed by Bennett's Type I Team. Current size is estimated at 36,311 acres. 3% Containment. Personnel Assigned: 348. Structures threatened and more evacuations are anticipated. Cause: Lightning. Lewis & Clark and Teton County are prepared to evacuate people on the Beaver Willow Road.

**Sawmill Complex** is located on the Lolo NF. The Sawmill Creek (320 acres), the Wyman #2 (2,000 acres), and the Fisher Point (200 acres) fires are being combined in the Sawmill Complex. The complex includes a total of 2,52 acres with 0% containment. Heintz's Type 2 IMT is assigned. Personnel assigned: 125. Cause: Lightning. Burning in timber with individual tree torching and backing fire. Structures threatened.

**Garceau** on the Flathead Indian Reservation. Kechter's Type 2 IMT. 3,045 acres and 75% contained. Personnel assigned: 354. Cause: Lightning. Timber and grass. Structures threatened. Weather moderated yesterday which kept the fire within containment lines.

**Brush Creek** is located on the Flathead NF, twenty-five miles west of Whitefish, MT. Brush Creek is 3,500 acres with 0% containment. Burning in timber and under story. Personnel assigned: 140. Cause: Lightning. Observed fire behavior; group torching, active crowning, and long range spotting. Road and recreation site closures. Flathead Co. SO is prepared for possible evacuation of Star Meadows.

**Owl** on Yellowstone NP and Gallatin NF. Wilder's IMT2. The Owl Fire is 2,800 acres. 50% contained. Wilder's Type 2 IMT is in command. Personnel assigned: 408. Cause: Lightning.

**Fool Creek WFU** on the Lewis and Clark and Flathead National Forests in Lewis and Clark County is now 11,492 acres. Reinarz's Fire Use Management Team. Fire behavior increased yesterday due to lower humidities and winds. Personnel assigned: 75. Cause: Lightning

**Pattengail Creek** on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF. 10 miles NE of Wisdom. The Pattengail Creek Fire is 4,295 acres and 15% contained. Type 3 Incident Organization. Personnel assigned: 55. Cause: Lightning. Fire became active on NW and NE perimeter with short range spotting, single and group tree torching.

**Porcupine** is located in the Gallatin National Forest, approximately 31 miles north of Livingston. Size is 124 acres at 20 percent contained. Personnel assigned: 17. The fire is torching and smoldering (with pockets of timber burning out).

**Conger Creek** on the Lolo National Forest, 20 miles north of Ovando. The fire is 3,750 acres with 0% containment. Type 3 Incident Organization. Structures are threatened. Personnel Assigned: 14. Cause: Lightning. Minimal growth yesterday.

## **NEW LARGE FIRES (Large fires are fires over 100 acres in size)**

**Rombo Mountain**, Bitterroot NF. Eighteen miles south of Darby, MT. Type 4 Incident Organization. Estimated size is 150 acres. Personnel assigned: 18. Burning in timber and under story. Crown fires with long-range (1/4 to 1/2 mile) spotting.

**Chippy Creek**, is located forty-two miles southwest of Kalispell, MT (Northwestern Land Office, Montana DNRC). Type 2 IMT ordered. Size is 500 acres. Burning in timber and under story. Extreme fire behavior with crowning and running. Structures threatened.

**For more information on Montana Fires:** <http://www.inciweb.org/state/27/>.

### **III. Weather**

Fire weather forecast for Montana...5:23 am MDT Wed Aug 1 2007

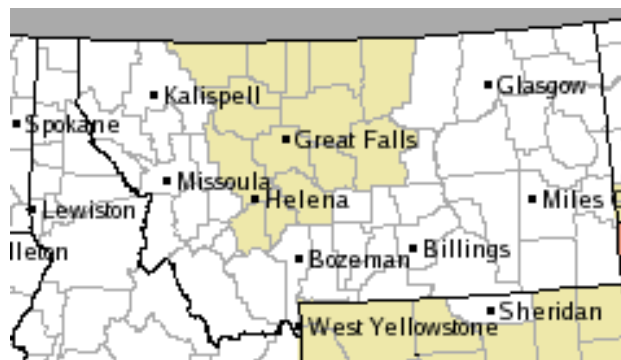
A more moist air mass will filter into the area today behind a surface boundary dropping southward through the state. Winds will shift more northeasterly behind the boundary. Low clouds spreading behind the boundary will lift out later this morning. With the incoming moisture and cooler temperatures today humidities will not drop quite as low this afternoon as they have the past couple of days. Temperatures will warm Thursday and Friday as the upper level ridge rebounds over the area but winds should be on the lighter side... Fire weather highlights are not anticipated.

### **Red Flag Warnings or Fire Weather Watches:**

Today the NWS has issued no Red Flag Warnings or Fire Watches.

However, they have issued a Hazardous Weather Outlook for portions of central Montana...north central Montana and southwest Montana.

Smoke from area wildfires will linger over north central and central Montana this morning. Visibilities may be locally reduced especially in low lying areas. The smoke will lift out this afternoon but may filter back in during the evening.



### **Definitions of a Fire Weather Watch and a Red Flag Warning:**

A fire weather watch or red flag warning is issued when the combination of dry fuels and weather conditions support extreme fire danger. These products are written for land and fire managers to highlight the increased fire danger.

A fire weather watch is issued up to 72 hours before the above conditions are expected to occur.

A red flag warning is issued when the conditions above are occurring or expected to occur within the next 24 hours.

<http://www.weather.gov/>

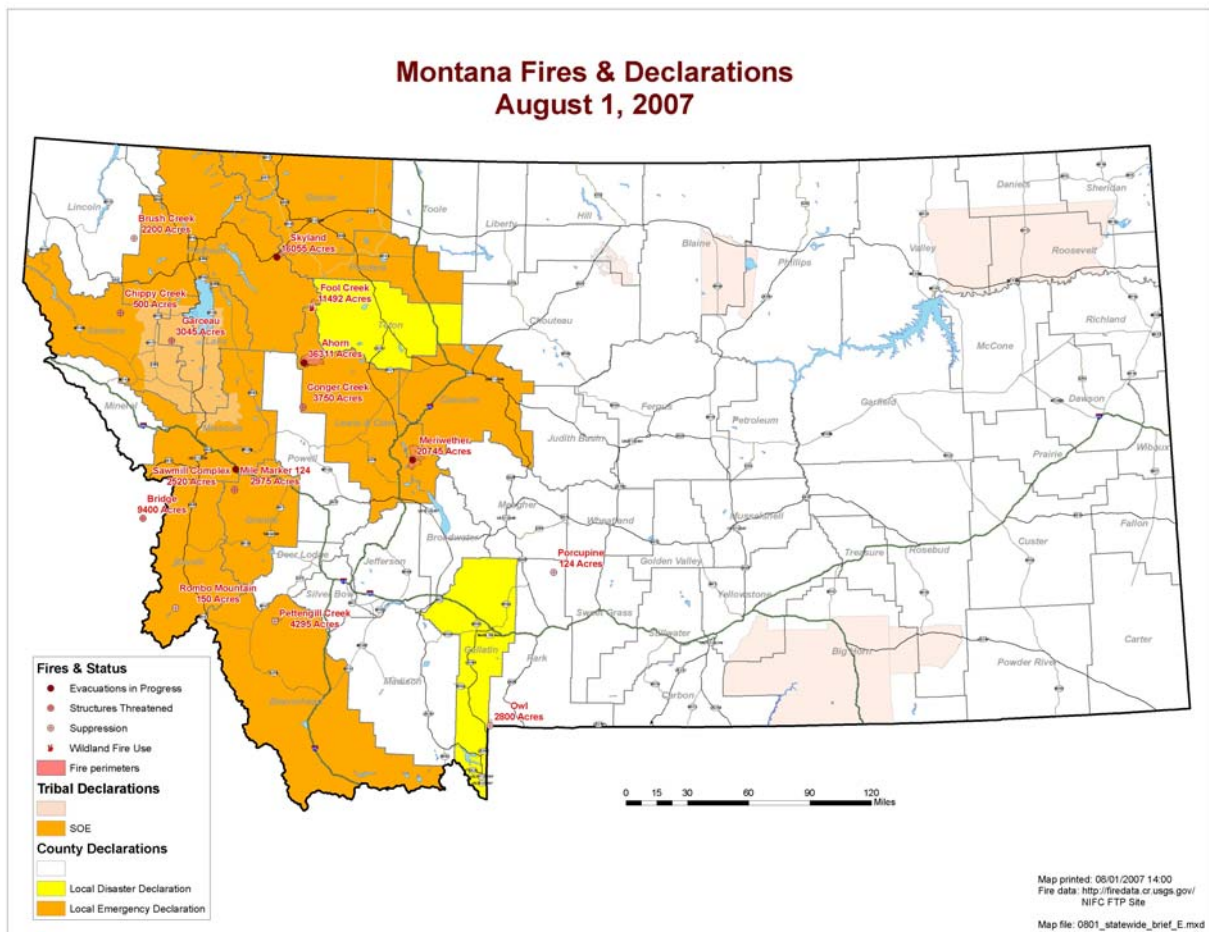
**Weather Forecast** For current Fire Weather Predictions, see the Daily Outlook at:  
[http://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/predictive/outlooks/daily\\_outlook.pdf](http://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/predictive/outlooks/daily_outlook.pdf).

**Fire Behavior Forecast** For current Fire Behavior Predictions, see:  
[http://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/predictive/outlooks/fire\\_behavior/fire\\_behavior.pdf](http://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/predictive/outlooks/fire_behavior/fire_behavior.pdf)

#### IV. State Declarations

- Statewide Declaration of a Wildland Fire Emergency

#### V. Local and Tribal Declarations



- **State of Emergency.** The following counties have declared a state of emergency:

Lewis and Clark  
Ravalli  
Lake  
Granite  
Cascade  
Missoula  
Beaverhead

Sanders  
Glacier  
Pondera  
Flathead  
Prairie  
Blackfeet Nation

- **Disaster Declaration.** The following counties have declared a wildfire disaster:

Teton

Gallatin

#### **VI. Local Government Emergency Operations**

- The Lewis and Clark County Emergency Operation Center was activated on July 19, 2007.

#### **VII. Requests for State Financial Assistance**

- N/A

#### **VIII. Summary of State Resources Committed (through the SECC)**

- MT-DES currently has two employees deployed with Incident Management Teams (through the Northern Rockies Coordination Center).
- MT-DES also has deployed an Agency Representative to the Blackfeet Indian Reservation Emergency Operations Center (EOC).
- One Montana Army National Guard UH-60 Blackhawk module is deployed for initial attack. The Blackhawk and its nine-person module are stationed in Helena.
- A second Montana Army National Guard UH-60 Blackhawk and module is deployed for initial attack. This Blackhawk and its nine-person module are stationed in Missoula.
- One Montana Army National Guard CH-47 Chinook and module has been deployed to assist Bennett's Type 1 Team with fire support on the Ahorn and Meriwether fires. The Chinook and its nine-person module are stationed in Helena.
- A Montana Army National Guard Security Team (26 personnel) has been assigned to the Mile Marker 124 Fire.
- A second Montana Army National Guard Security Team (26 personnel) has been ordered for the Meriwether Fire and are being deployed today (8/1/07).
- A third Montana Army National Guard Security Team (26 personnel) has been ordered for the Sawmill Fire and will be deployed on 8/2/07.
- A third Montana Army National Guard UH-60 Blackhawk and module has been ordered to support initial attack efforts at the Northwest Land Office. This Blackhawk and its nine-person module will report to the Northwest Land Office

(in Kalispell) on 8/2/07.

- Starting on July 20, 2007, at 0700 the SECC was activated and staffed to a Level III status with extended hours (0700-1900). We remain at Level III. Outside of those hours, the MT DES staff Duty Officer is available 24 hrs and may be reached at (406) 841-3911.